

Cheater Pho Bo (Vietnamese Beef Noodle Soup)

3 star anise
3 spice cloves
1/2 teaspoon black peppercorns
1 3-inch cinnamon stick
2 garlic gloves, peeled, smashed and sliced
1 3-inch-long piece fresh ginger peeled and cut in half lengthwise
6 cups homemade or quality low-sodium beef broth
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
4 ounces dried rice noodles
1/2 pound top loin steak, or any other steak, partially frozen and sliced very thin
2 or 3 green onions, sliced thin
Handful of fresh cilantro, coarsely chopped
Handful of fresh basil, coarsely chopped
1/2 small onion, sliced very thin
1 cup or so bean sprouts, rinsed
1 lime, cut into wedges
Sriracha or Sambal Oelek chile paste (or both!)
Hoisin sauce
Fresh jalapeno, sliced thin
Fresh serrano, sliced thin

First off you should prep all your garnishes and steak and set them out on a large platter or board on the table. Next, add the star anise, cloves, peppercorns, cinnamon stick, and garlic to a dry Dutch oven or soup pot over medium heat. Toast the ingredients, tossing around occasionally, until fragrant, about 2 or 3 minutes. Add the beef broth, soy sauce, and lime juice. Bring up to a boil, then reduce to a low simmer for about 30 or 40 minutes.

Meanwhile pour boiling water over the rice noodles in a glass bowl, cover, and soak the noodles for about 10 or 15 minutes. Drain the noodles and portion them and the steak into individual serving bowls.

When ready to serve, strain the broth then pour the simmering beef broth over the steak and noodles using a cup with a spout (such as a glass Pyrex measuring cup). Let each person add any or all garnishes to their bowl. I put everything in mine! I ate this with chopsticks alternating with a spoon, but you could use a fork and spoon instead.